

# SECRET

DD/FBIS

HANDLING ROUTINE	CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED	MESSAGE REFERENCE NO. A-1825
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TO: ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS AND AID AND ICA  
OVERSEAS ESTABLISHMENTS

FROM: Department of State (PER/ER/FN)

E.O. 11652:

TAGS: APER, AFSP

SUBJECT: Exception Grades for FSN Employees

REF: FSN Position Classification Standards and A-0574 of  
March 20, 1980

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As announced in Para. 7 of the referenced airgram, a new feature referred to as exception grades is introduced into the new FSN position classification system (Local Employee Position Classification Handbook (LEPCH)). This extends and augments the procedure outlined in pages 27 and 28 of the LEPCH for allocation of positions to level above the highest class for which a standard exists. Exception grades are designed to provide more flexibility in the new FSN position classification system to meet highly exceptional or unusual circumstances in the employment of FSNs at missions abroad which cannot be accommodated satisfactorily through the normal position classification process.

An exception grade is defined as a grade level designation for any FSN position which differs from (i.e., is either higher or lower than) the grade level designation for the same type and complexity of work described in standards published in the LEPCH. Exception grades may be authorized in the following circumstances:

(A) The social or cultural environment of a post results in the ranking of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required of a position in a manner which clearly differs from and warrants a different ranking than that reflected in the standards.

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CLEARANCES:

see last page for clearances

(B) Peculiar, major, and exceptionally valuable contributions are made by an employee on a continuing basis which significantly enhances post's ability to accomplish its mission. (NOTE: This should not be construed as applicable to conventional "mixed" positions.)

(C) The circumstances of a particular FSN's employment with the USG presents exceptional and constant danger to an individual employee or to the incumbents of particular positions in the official performance of duties. (This criterion will not apply to all FSN positions at a post nor will it apply to danger unrelated to the actual job performance.)

A mission's request for an exception grade should be submitted to the appropriate regional bureau Executive Director with copies to other affected headquarters agencies. It should cite this airgram, the criterion which specifically applies, and full details of the exceptional circumstances involved, including the length of time post estimates such circumstances will continue to exist. Each case should indicate the concurrence of all agencies at post level in the proposal, which concurrence can be one of the tasks of the post Interagency FSN Position Classification Appeals Panel.

Upon receipt in Washington each request will be reviewed and coordinated with other affected headquarters agencies and PER/ER/FN. The post will be advised of the joint decision at the earliest date. Posts will not have exception grade authority upon reassumption of FSN position classification authority following the moratorium imposed by Para. 8 of A-1025, 1979. Posts which are now under the one-year moratorium will submit their requests under this airgram after the moratorium has ended.

Exception grades will be effected as promotion actions in accordance 3 FAM 952 and are normally granted on a temporary basis. Posts are required to advise the bureau (with copies to other affected agency headquarters) of any change in the conditions surrounding the authorization which would justify withdrawal of the exception grade status. When visiting missions, contractors and headquarters agency personnel will review periodically the justification for continuation of any exception grade authorizations. At such time as exception grade circumstances no longer exist, the position will be reclassified to the proper grade level according to applicable standards and the incumbent's or vacated position's grade will be adjusted accordingly. Grade retention procedures described in A-0543 of March 17, 1980, are not applicable. It is intended that exception grades be authorized stringently in order to maintain the integrity of the new position classification system.

In addition to the above major change in administration of the system, we take this opportunity to advise missions that experience

gained in the installation of the new system in sixty posts has provided concrete evidence of some inadequacies in the standards of the system. We have therefore embarked upon an undertaking to revised several existing classification standards and to develop some new standards with the view toward substantial improvements. To this end, the following projects are under way:

1. a review of existing standards for the secretary and personnel series,
2. a review of existing standards for all series of the budget and fiscal group,
3. the development of standards within the budget and fiscal group to cover AID controller positions,
4. the development of revisions in existing standards for the federal benefits assistance series,
5. the development of standards for Peace Corps and FBIS positions,
6. the study of proposed ICA administrative standards, and
7. the development of additional guidance on the establishment of trainee jobs to increase career development opportunities.

Further, we are aware that some missions are under the impression that centralized control over the classification of all FSN positions will continue after the one year moratorium on post FSN position classification authority has passed. This is not the case. Procedures which are now being developed contemplate limited Washington review of post FSN position classification actions through the monitoring of periodic promotion reports and a normal post-audit function performed by contractors or headquarters agency personnel.

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Clearances:

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